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ABSTRACT

This teaching outline for studying the significance of the Middle East to religious history and world history provides lesson suggestions for the study of geography, political science, philosophy, religion, anthropology, economics, archaeology, and history. Twenty-seven learning objectives focus on the students' acquisition of critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving skills and the significance of the various cities, historical religious sites, and other physical landmarks within this region. Ten desired student attitudes and twelve desired learning skills are listed. Suggested learning activities are described in relation to initiating, developing, and culminating the unit as well as to additional areas of study. Seven references are included. (DJC)

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THE MIDDLE EAST: BIRTHPLACE OF THREE RELIGIONS

A RESOURCE UNIT

by

Marlow Ediger

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[Edgar, Malone]

The Middle East: Birthplace of three Religions

(A Resource Unit)

Few places in the world have names of cities which are as salient as the following: Jerusalem, Jericho, Hebron, Bethany, Bethlehem, Samaria, and Nazareth. These cities have made important history in the past. Their importance remains. The Middle East can be studied in terms of the following social science disciplines:

1. the various geographical features which make for variety and interest (geography).
2. the form of government which is in Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Israel (political science).
3. the different religious groups which include Islam, Judaism, and the Samaritans (philosophy, religion, and cultural anthropology).
4. the major farm crops produced, exported, and imported (economics).
5. the findings of archaeologists who study ancient civilizations in the land of Palestine (archeology).
6. a study of relevant ideas of the past as it relates to the Middle East (history).

Many people from other nations visit the Middle East each year. This area of the world carries a fascination of its own when thinking of significant places on the face of the earth.

I. Objectives for the Unit

Teachers need to select worthwhile objectives for pupils to achieve. With the enormous amount of knowledge available in books, magazines, encyclopedias, films, filmstrips, and other sources, it becomes an important task in evaluating which understandings objectives pupils should achieve.

A. Understandings

To develop within the pupil an understanding that:

1. Jerusalem was the capital of ancient Israel in the days of King David and King Solomon.
2. The present wall around Old Jerusalem was built by the Turks in 1542; the Turks governed the Holy Land from 1517 to 1917 when it was captured by Great Britain. (This was the third wall built around Old Jerusalem.)
3. The Wailing Wall is located inside of Old Jerusalem and contains large blocks from the only remaining wall of the ancient Jewish Temple, built in the days of Herod the Great. (The Wailing Wall is holy to devout Jews.)
4. The Dome of the Rock, a Moslem mosque built in 691 A.D., was built directly over Mount Moriah. From this place, Abraham was tempted to sacrifice Isaac. Here also, the prophet Mohammed took a midnight journey to heaven and returned back to earth again. The Dome of the Rock, located directly east of the Wailing Wall, is octagonal in design and has a gold plated dome.
5. Jerusalem is the holiest city in the world to the Jews; it is the third holiest city in the world to the Arabs (Mecca, the birthplace of Mohammed, and Medina, the place where Mohammed is entombed, are holier to the Molsems).
6. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, also located inside of Old Jerusalem, was believed by the Crusaders to be the place where Christ had been crucified and entombed.

7. The Mount of Olives located directly east and outside the walls of Old Jerusalem is the place where it is believed that Christ ascended into heaven. The Garden of Gethsemane is located at the foot of the Mount of Olives.
8. Hezekiah's tunnel, built in 732 B.C., brought water from outside to inside the walls of Old Jerusalem. Jerusalem was attacked by the ancient Assyrian army in 732 B.C. One can walk through the tunnel for about 1700 feet where it ultimately ends in the Pool of Siloam. The entry to the tunnel was hidden from the Assyrians; water was always in short supply in the Jerusalem area. Thus, the Assyrian army failed to conquer the inhabitants inside the walled city.
9. Israel's Knesset (Parliament) is located in New Jerusalem. Across the street from the Knesset is a model seven branch candelabrum. The candelabrum was located in the ancient tabernacle when the ancient Israelites lived in the Sinai desert after having fled from slavery in Egypt.
10. The Mea She'arim area of Jerusalem consists of Orthodox Jews who carefully follow the teachings of the Torah.
11. The church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is believed by many to house the manger where Christ was born. Directly east of Bethlehem are the Shepherd's fields. Here shepherds still herd their sheep in an area where the birth of Christ was announced, according to devout Christians.
12. Hebron, among other things, is famous for its pottery and the Mosque of Abraham which contains the tombs of the patriarchs and their wives--Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and

Rebecca, Jacob and Leah. (Rachel's tomb is located near Bethlehem-- Rachel also was the wife of Jacob.) These tombs are relevant in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

13. The Arabs claim Abraham as their forefather through his son Ishmael, whereas the Jews claim Abraham as their forefather through his son Isaac.
14. The elevation of land descends rapidly when going from Jerusalem (approximately 2500 **feet** above sea level) east to Jericho (approximately 700 feet below sea level), a distance of eighteen miles.
15. Jericho is a beautiful garden spot located in what normally would be a desert area. Irrigation water from Elisha's fountain helps the Jericho area produce beautiful oranges, grapefruits, lemons, bananas, pomegranates, dates, and figs.
16. The Dead Sea located four miles southeast of Jericho is the world's lowest place on earth in terms of elevation. It is excellent for people to float in its waters. No effort at all is needed to stay afloat due to the Dead Sea having approximately 26 per cent salt and other mineral content in its waters.
17. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in caves in the area known as Qumran which is located adjacent to the Dead Sea.
18. Masada, a rock fortress 800 feet above the level of the Dead Sea and located near to that body of water, contains ruins of palaces built by Herod. Jewish Zealots who

revolted against Rome held out on this fortress until 73 A.D.

19. Numerous new cities are being built in the Negev desert; Arad is an example of one of these cities. Some workers in industries along the Dead Sea live in Arad.
20. Approximately four hundred Samaritans are left in the world and their temple is located in Nablus which is forty miles north of Jerusalem.
21. Ancient Samaria contains many important ruins of early times such as Herod's place, the temple of Caesar Augustus, and a part of a wall built to protect the city.
22. Directly north of the Sea of Galilee are the remains of an ancient Jewish synagogue dating back to the third century A.D. This synagogue is located at Capernaum.
23. Tel Aviv is a center of culture with its concerts, theatres, and museums. It is important also for commerce, banking, and industry.
24. Haifai, a port city, has ships from many nations of the world engaged in world trade. The city of Haifa ascends Mount Carmel.
25. Many workers in rural areas live on a kibbutz, in a village, or on a moshav.
26. Homeless and stateless Palestinian Arab refugees are a major problem for humanitarian nations to resolve.
27. The five pillars of Islam are sacred duties to devout Molsems.

B. Skills

To develop within pupils skill to:

1. Read social studies content with understanding.
2. Listen carefully to the ideas of other.
3. Write content which conveys ideas accurately to others.
4. Participate effectively as a member of a committee.
5. Develop a relief map.
6. Make dioramas which communicate ideas effectively.
7. Develop a frieze which illustrates major generalizations developed in the unit.
8. Effectively present ideas orally to listeners.
9. Think critically and creatively, as well as engage in problem solving.
10. Apply what has bee learned to a new situation.
11. Dramatize important events accurately in the unit.
12. Read content involving a variety of purposes.

C. Attitudes

To develop within the pupil an attitude of:

1. Appreciating the contributions of the Holy Land area.
2. Wanting to learn more about the Holy Land.
3. Desiring to comprehend what has been read utilizing a variety of purposes.
4. Wanting to be a good listener.
5. Appreciating the contributions of others when working in small groups or the class as a whole.
6. Desiring to exhibit quality work commensurate with capabilities.
7. Appreciating learning activities involving creative thinking, critical thinking, and problem solving.

8. Wanting to utilize what has been learned previously.
9. Desiring to write and speak effectively when expressing ideas to others.
10. Wanting to solve problems pertaining to the Palestinian Arabs vs. Israel in wanting control over the land of Palestine.

II. Learning Activities

Learning activities must be selected which are meaningful, interesting, and purposeful for learners. More learning activities are in this unit than the teacher can use in teaching so that selection from many is possible and individual differences may be provided for.

A. Initiating the Unit

A good teaching strategy must be in evidence to begin a unit of study. Selected pupils have little interest in the new unit. Thus the social studies teacher must select learning activities which arouses the interests of learners. In any class, certain pupils will lack adequate background information to benefit fully from the new unit. The teacher has an important responsibility in guiding these learners to obtain needed information to take care of these deficiencies. It is always important for pupils to sense purpose in ongoing learning activities. Thus, the teacher must assist pupils in establishing reasons for studying a new unit.

1. A resource person who has lived and/or traveled extensively in the Holy Land should be invited to speak and show slides on this area of the world. In most communities, a good

possibility exists for having this learning experience for pupils. The slides could show the wall around Old Jerusalem, the Wailing Wall, the Dome of the Rock, the Mount of Olives, Hezekiah's Tunnel, the Pool of Siloam, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Adequate time must be available in discussing each of the slides.

2. The teacher may place the following pictures on a bulletin board: the Mosque of Abraham at Hebron; the Dead Sea; a garden scene in Jericho; and Qumran (the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found). An appealing caption should accompany the display. the teacher could discuss questions like the following with pupils:
   a. Why is the Mosque of Abraham important?
   b. What makes the Dead sea an unusual place to swim in?
   c. Why is Jericho a garden spot surrounded by a desert?
   d. Which subculture lived in caves 2,000 years ago such as those found in Qumran?
3. An interest center can be developed with the following items as suggestions: a relief map of Palestine; a large picture of a synagogue and a mosque; as well as illustrations of oranges, bananas, grapefruit, and lemons. Labels should be neatly developed and placed appropriately with their related objects. Pupils could be stimulated to ask the following questions pertaining to the interest center:
   a. Why does the Holy Land have much variation in geographical features, such as level land near Tel Aviv

as compared to hilly land in the Judean Hills around New and Old Jerusalem?

b. How do synagogues differ from mosques?

c. What kind of a climate do oranges, grapefruits, and lemons need to grow well?

Pupils should use a variety of sources to gather needed information in solving these and other problem areas.

B. Developing the Unit

Pupil interest and purpose should remain high throughout the unit. When developing the unit, understandings, skills, and attitudinal objectives need to be developed in greater depth. The teacher should make careful selection of learning activities in order to provide for each individual student in the class setting.

1. Working in committees, each group could work on one of the following tasks:

a. Gather information from reputable encyclopedias on farming in Palestine. The kibbutz, village, and moshav would become an important part of the topic.

b. Develop a frieze on important manufactured products in the land of Palestine.

c. Make a Relief map of the Holy Land, showing elevation features as well as major cities.

d. Write letters to travel agencies ordering free charts and pictures on The Middle East. Discuss the contents in these charts. Contributions of each committee should be shared with the entire class.

2. Pupils may read content from their social studies textbooks. Prior to reading, new words need to be introduced by writing them in neat manuscript letters on the chalkboard and discussing their meanings with pupils. Purpose needs to be involved on the part of pupils when reading content. Pupils may read content to answer the following questions:
   a. What is life like on a kibbutz? In a village?
   b. How does a kibbutz differ from a moshav?
   c. How does elevation of land affect temperature readings in the Holy Land?
   d. What can be done to provide justice and the good life for all in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Arabs?

   Answers to the above questions should be discussed thoroughly. Critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving should be emphasized in the discussion as important skills for learners to develop.
3. Pupils individually or in committees might plan a trip to the Holy Land. In planning their journey, the following would need to be researched:
   a. Method of travel from pupil's home area to New York City (cost would also need to be determined).
   b. Means and cost of traveling from New York City to the Holy Land. If air transportation is utilized, one would fly from Kennedy International Airport to Lod Airport near Tel Aviv.

c. Places to visit in the Holy Land; pupils would need to use many reference sources to know which places to visit and why.

4. Pupils in committees could dramatize scenes and situations pertaining, among others, to the following:

a. The building of Hezekiah's Tunnel to give an ample supply of water to ancient Jerusalem when the Assyrian armies were threatening that city.

b. A session in the Knesset (Parliament) of Israel, as well as in the Parliament of Jordan.

c. Loading ships in the port city of Haifa.

d. Making pottery in Hebron.

e. Taking care of oranges, lemons, grapefruits, and pomegranate trees in Jericho.

f. The work of archaeologists in examining the Dead Sea scrolls.

Much research will need to be completed by pupils to get information necessary for engaging effectively in these dramatic activities.

5. Pupils may read library books of their choosing on the Middle East. Findings from these books may be shared in committees of four members.

C. Culminating the Unit

At this point in the unit, pupils need to have ample opportunities to review previous learnings as well as to relate knowledge. It is important for pupils to have a high degree of interest in this unit as it is drawing to a close.

1. Pupils in committees might keep diary entries of major conclusions realized from each class session devoted to the unit "The Middle East: Birthplace of Three Religions." It is good to give all committees opportunities to record these diary entries on a rotating basis. Boredom in learning sets in if the same learning activity is provided each day for involved pupils. The committee which is writing the diary entries for each class session devoted to teaching this unit can also develop an illustration or several illustrations pertaining to the written content.
2. Given a set of pictures, pupils tell or write the significance of each. Suggested pictures which could be shown to pupils may include the following:
   a. The Dome of the Rock, a Moslem Mosque.
   b. The Dead Sea and the Jordan River.
   c. The rock fortress of Masada.
   d. The new city of Arad or other cities in the Negev desert.
   e. The Sea of Galilee and the ancient synagogue at Capernaum.
   f. Ruins at ancient Samaria, such as Herod's palace and the temple of Caesar Augustus.
   g. The Samaritan temple at Nablus.
   h. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
3. Pupils individually or in committees may write an experience summary on major generalizations developed in the unit.

4. The class as a whole might identify additional questions pertaining to "The Middle East: Birthplace of Three Religions." Pupils volunteer to gather information in answer to these questions and report their findings to the entire class.
5. Pupils individually or in small groups make a diorama pertaining to an important scene in the Holy Land. Careful consideration need to be given in selecting the scene. Equally important is to present information as accurately as possible in the diorama. Through teacher-pupil planning, criteria can be determined for developing these dioramas.

Additional areas of study may include:

1. Causes of wars between the Palestinian Arabs and Israel. Here, students should be introduced to and read
   a. the Husseim MacMahon Correspondence of 1915 in which independence was promised to Palestinian Arabs in the land of Palestine.
   b. the Balfour Declaration of 1917 whereby Great Britain promised a homeland to Jews in the land of Palestine.
   c. the United Nations partition plan of 1947, and the resulting wars between Arabs and Jews.
   d. statehood for Israel versus many Palestinian refugees in camps, in the land formerly called Palestine.
2. Resolution of conflicts necessary between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs.
   a. the Arab-Israeli six day war of 1967 in which Israel captured the West Bank and the Gaza strip, the latter

two are comprised largely of Palestinian Arab in population. The West Bank and the Gaza strip formerly were a part of the land of Palestine.

b. the Palestinian uprising against Israel on the West Bank and the Gaza strip.

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